

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

Status Of The Claims

This is an Amendment and Reply to the Final Office Action mailed December 23, 2008, in which the following rejections were set forth: Claims 1 and 2 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over WO-02-053482 (“WO ‘482”) in view of *Sagane*.

By this response, no claims have been added, amended, or canceled. As such, Claims 1 and 2 are pending in this application.

Claim Rejections

The rejection of Claim 1 has been maintained as being unpatentable over WO ‘482 in view of *Sagane*. This rejection has been maintained even though the Examiner concurs that WO ‘482 fails to teach a dripping zone downstream of the bath and a drier being disposed downstream of the dripping zone.

The Examiner has additionally broadly defined the dripping zone as “a space/area in which draining or dripping may occur”—in contrast to the wording of the previous Office Action dated May 27, 2008. As such, the Examiner now contends that *Sagane* discloses a dripping zone or at least a space downstream of the bath in which articles can be tilted in such a way that coating material can drip from the articles.

The Examiner further holds that *Sagane* discloses a drier downstream of the dripping zone that allows the article to be coated with different coating materials, without cross-contamination between adjacent coating stations.

Applicant does concur with much of the Examiner’s position, namely:

- a. *Sagane* discloses that in the pre-treatment B, the workpiece 1 is continuously moved from a floor conveyor position and an overhead position and vice versa (see Para [0079]); and,
- b. *Sagane* discloses that in stage 7 of pre-treatment B, excess fluid is allowed to drip from the workpiece 1, which is in the floor conveyor position (see Para p[0096]).

Applicant however does not concur with the Examiner’s position that the area in which the workpiece 1 is arranged in a floor conveyor position close to the bath 20 is a dripping zone—and thus equating such to Applicant’s Claim 1.

That is, according to Para [0099] of *Sagane*, the workpiece 1 is vertically rotated within the electrodeposition bath 20 and subsequently removed there from. After being removed from the bath 20, the workpiece 1 is in its floor conveyor position. Perhaps because in the pre-treatment B the floor conveyor position allows excess fluid to drip from the workpiece 1, the Examiner presumes that the floor conveyor position is a position that generally supports excess fluid to drip from the workpiece 1. This understanding of *Sagane* however is not correct for the following reasons.

Although *Sagane* discloses that it is possible to allow excess paint to run off and at the same time to realize uniform painting—since the workpiece 1 emerges from the bath 20 at a constant speed, front part first, when it is removed from the electrodeposition bath 20—*Sagane* does not disclose in the Specification or Figures that the workpiece 1 is moved in a position spaced downstream of the bath 20 to allow excess paint to drain off. See *Sagane*, Para [0099].

In contrast, as can be readily seen from Figure 8 of *Sagane*, the station 9 is positioned downstream of the bath 20. (See also *Sagane*, Figure 1). The station 9 however is a washing station (see *Sagane*, Para [0080]) and not a dripping station or dripping zone. In accordance with Figure 8, the dripping of excess paint from the workpiece 1 takes place when the workpiece 1 is in a position above the electrodeposition bath 20, but is not in a position downstream of the bath 20. The workpiece 1 in its floor conveyor position above the bath 20 is shown in dashed lines. And as can be seen from the circular arrow in the center of the dashed lined workpiece 1, the workpiece 1 is rotated by 360° when it is in the area of the electrodeposition bath 20. But there is no disclose or suggestion to move the workpiece 1 in a position downstream of the bath 20 to allow excess paint to drip.

Sagane therefore fails to disclose a dripping zone which is disposed in the path of motion of the articles and is positioned downstream of a last bath.

Applicant further contends that the mere fact that the workpiece 1 can be brought into a floor conveyor position above the bath 20, which corresponds with the floor conveyor position of the workpiece 1 in stage 7 of pre-treatment B, cannot be the basis to identify a dripping zone as defined in Claim 1. That is, the Examiner's definition of a dripping zone as "a space/area in which draining or dripping may occur" does not alter the fact that a dripping zone according to current Claim 1 has to be downstream of the last bath, which in case of *Sagane* would need to be downstream of the electrodeposition bath 20. And as noted above, *Sagane* fails to disclose a

dripping zone arranged downstream of the bath 20. Consequently, *Sagane* fails to compensate for the shortcomings of *WO '482*.

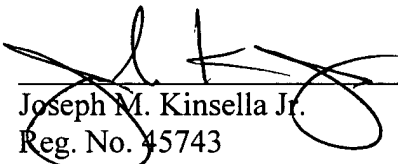
As such, because the combination of *WO '482* and *Sagane* fails to disclose each and every element of the Applicant's claimed invention, Applicant asserts that Claim 1—as well as all claims depending there from—is in condition for allowance and respectfully requests that the rejection of pending claims be removed.

CONCLUSION

Based on the above remarks, Applicant respectfully submits that all pending claims are in condition for allowance and requests that the claims be allowed to issue. Applicant believes that no additional fees are required with this correspondence; however if any additional fees are required, the Commissioner is authorized to deduct such fees from Deposit Account No. 50-0545.

Respectfully submitted,

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Joseph M. Kinsella Jr.
Reg. No. 45743
One of Applicant's Attorneys

